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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOEL HEFLEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES**

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This morning, three subcommittees of the Committee on National Security meet to consider the current state of readiness in the military. From the perspective of each of the subcommittees represented here, readiness is fraying. There is a perception among the troops that pay and benefits in the military have eroded and yesterday's hearing of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel concerning the defense health program did little to allay those concerns. Chairman Bateman and the Subcommittee on Military Readiness have focused intently on the erosion of unit readiness and the stress imposed by trying to do more and more with less and less. The subcommittee I chair remains deeply concerned about the effect of crumbling infrastructure and substandard housing on morale, retention, and the ability to execute missions effectively and efficiently.

The task, it seems to me, is to try to begin to knit the signs of hollowness together so that we can more fully understand the current state of readiness in the military. For my part, I hope we can finally put to rest the false notion promoted by the Department of Defense over the last couple of years that excessive infrastructure spending has created shortfalls elsewhere in the budget, particularly in modernization and the accounts which directly support mission readiness. The evidence is overwhelming that infrastructure investment has been chronically underfunded by this Administration and, were it not for the Congress, thousands of military personnel and their families would be living in poorer conditions and working in far from reasonable conditions.

General Bramlett's recent assessment for the Chief of Staff of the Army is that FORSCOM commanders are no longer able to sustain infrastructure. "Break and fix" appears to be the best possible outcome. Reducing backlogs is beyond the ability of the Army. That guarantees a further crumbling of base infrastructure and a further degrading of basic living conditions, working conditions, and the facilities required to train, maintain, and deploy the force.

General Bramlett's assessment is mirrored by what I have seen at military installations across the country for each of the services. It ratifies much of the testimony the subcommittee has taken in recent years. The Defense Department and the military services cannot continue to put things off for another year hoping that the problem can be resolved on someone else's watch. Congress alone cannot solve the problem. We must work together. I am gratified that the President finally seems to acknowledge the problem. I hope that additional resources in next year's defense program will go directly to meet some of the critical shortfalls in infrastructure which can no longer be ignored. We have dug ourselves a deep hole and it is time that we begin to dig ourselves out.